

Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Administration Committee

Final Meeting Summary February 12, 1999

Approved March 19, 1999

Present: Doug Hurley, Chair, Bob Dilger, Greg Devereux, Tomio Moriguchi, Connie Niva, Patricia Notter, Judie Stanton

Absent: Peter Bennett, Vice Chair, Representative Ruth Fisher, Senator Dino Rossi, Ken Smith

Others in Attendance: Pierce Scranton (for Senator Rossi), Jerry Alb, presenter (WSDOT), Bill Chapman, presenter (Preston Gates & Ellis), Judy Stratton (WSDOT), Charlie Howard (WSDOT), Patricia Boies (Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce)

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and reviewed the summary of the January 14th meeting. The Committee approved the summary as drafted.

Matrix of Transportation Functions and Funding in Washington State

Daniel Malarkey of ECONorthwest presented a schematic diagram of the governmental entities involved in building and maintaining Washington's transportation system (attached). The attached matrix includes estimates of annual public expenditures for various activities and jurisdictions, which is intended to aid the Committee in identifying reforms with potential for significant returns.

More than 400 agencies and jurisdictions in Washington state (federal, state, counties, cities, RTPOs and MPOs, transit agencies, and others) have transportation expenditures in excess of \$3 billion annually. The Chair noted that private spending on personal automobiles and commercial vehicle fleets significantly outweighs public sector expenditures. (The Puget Sound Regional Council estimated a ratio of private to public spending of approximately nine-to-one.) Permitting and mitigation activities were estimated at 10 percent of capital costs for roads and transit projects, but they can cost up to 30 percent of large, complex projects.

Recent Reform Efforts

Bill Chapman of Preston Gates & Ellis appeared at the invitation of the Chair to share his expertise in permitting issues and previous reform efforts with the Administration Committee.

Chapman set the context for the Blue Ribbon Commission's efforts by reviewing five recent efforts to streamline the regulatory framework in Washington state: the Local Governance Study Commission (1988), the Growth Strategies Commission (1989-1990), the Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform (1993-1994), the Legislative Transportation Committee's Environmental Cost Savings and Permit Coordination Study (1994), and the Land Use Study Commission (1996-1998). He explained the successes and shortcomings of these previous efforts and discussed how the Administration Committee could benefit from this prior experience. The Committee's draft background paper on Permit Reform provides more information on these previous reform efforts in Washington state.

WSDOT's Current Reform Efforts

Jerry Alb of the Washington State Department of Transportation, with assistance from Judy Stratton, explained the problems with the current process for obtaining permissions for transportation projects. He highlighted the complex framework of federal, state, local, and tribal laws, Executive Orders, regulations, and permits that can make it difficult to develop projects. The Committee's draft background paper on Permit Reform contains more information on the existing framework of laws, regulations, and permit requirements that affects transportation projects.

Alb described several efforts that WSDOT is conducting to simplify the process of undertaking projects. He noted that the Legislative Transportation Committee's 1994 *Environmental Cost Savings and Permit Coordination Study* includes 36 specific recommendations that guide much of the current reform efforts. He described a pilot project that WSDOT is employing on State Route 104 to improve the NEPA process by involving more stakeholders early in the decision making to pursue a consensus agreement. He also discussed other reform efforts underway at WSDOT, including a watershed-based approach to environmental mitigation, use of geographic information systems (GIS) to facilitate better decision making, and improved coordination of capital projects with other state and local agencies.

The Committee discussed the merits of WSDOT's current activities and agreed that they would like staff to provide more information on these reform efforts and how the Committee could support and extend these ongoing efforts. The Chair and Committee members noted that WSDOT appears to be doing good work, but their efforts at reform are necessarily constrained by the existing institutional and regulatory system. Accordingly, as noted in the draft background paper on Permit Reform, the agency's reforms are basically incremental in nature, while the Administration Committee may also wish to consider larger-scale reform efforts.

Promising Reforms to the Permit Process

Bill Chapman of Preston Gates & Ellis presented four objectives that potential reforms to the permitting process should meet: 1) decrease congestion and increase safety, 2) reduce environmental impacts, 3) make decisions that stick, and 4) save time and money. He highlighted several promising areas of current reform efforts that deserve continued attention, and he suggested several new topics that the Committee could consider. The Committee's draft background paper on Permit Reform discusses the reform proposals that Chapman recommended.

The Committee discussed the ideas that Chapman presented and agreed that staff should expand on these ideas and draft recommendations for the Committee to consider.

Upcoming Meetings

In the coming weeks, the Chair plans to meet with leaders and staff of other recent reform efforts (such as the Land Use Study Commission and the Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform), and he invited interested Committee members to participate. His goal in having these discussions is to learn more about where the other commissions made progress and where they encountered obstacles. Understanding the experiences of these previous efforts should help inform the work of the Administration Committee and guide it towards the most productive topic areas. These meetings are not yet scheduled, but Committee members will receive announcements in advance.

The next Administration Committee meeting is scheduled for **Friday, March 19**, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, in the LaGuardia Room of the SeaTac Holiday Inn, located at 17338 International Boulevard in SeaTac.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.